

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

PEDAGOGICAL FACULTY

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC EDUCATION

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**CENTRAL AFRICAN MUSIC**  
**A STUDY OF TRIBAL CEREMONIAL MUSIC**

I declare that I wrote my bachelor thesis quite independently using the indicated sources and literature.

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## INTRODUCTION

Trying to seek a theme for my bachelor thesis I tried to find something that I've never studied, an area of music that it would be very interesting for me and others. Ethnomusicology is one theme that we can learn a lot from and we can compare with European music.

According to Africa, the most known to all is the West African music. It is known as the music that led us to blues, jazz, salsa and rumba . But in Central Africa the music is somehow different, because they were under French and Belgian occupation and therefore music did not develop as much. The most important thing in Central Africa is their ceremonies. And from there we can see rhythm, dance, music and drama.

Considering the fact that I was searching books written in English and most of the literatures I found referred to West African music, my search was very difficult. At the end I found some literature about general African music that had the most important things about Central Africa.

As a work it can help many students and teachers. The reason is the connection with Greek music, especially Greek modes and forms from the time of Gregorian chant, and with oriental music. Of course I cannot leave the European music behind considering the many forms, styles, types that are relative and very common.

Generally, it is a very interesting theme that it is very difficult to find and, in my opinion, everyone that will be able to read it will learn something more in his music study.

## GEOGRAPHICAL, CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE AREAS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

After the end of the Second War, countries in Africa won their independency because of several reasons such as the revolution against the Territorial Army and economical crises. As a result of new dividing the territories after the Second World War, countries in Africa won their independency, after revolution against the Territorial Army and because they had economical crises. Today most of these countries are republics but they still have internal problems. The Geographical area in Central Africa is divided in latitudes. This division can be set as: c. 5° north latitude, c. 9° south latitude, c. 37° east longitude and c. 14° east longitude. In these latitudes since there were boundary marks, political territories involved. These territories were French Equatorial Africa, the Belgian Congo and Ruanda – Urundi, Uganda and Tanganyika.

Moving to culture areas in this equatorial belt we can recognize two basic areas. The first is the *cattle area* in the eastern part and *agriculture area* in the rest (to the west of the central lakes). We can identify these culture areas by economic structure and by other culture components as religion and social organization something homogenous for these areas.

In *cattle complex* we can see herding and dairying activities, round caves, part lineal organization, polygamy, male age-grouping, monotheism which is flexible, ancestor work ship and lack of interest in secret cults. In this culture area we must mention the *Watutsi*, with pastoral activities and the “means of livelihood”.

On the other hand in *agriculture area* we can see interest in farming and marketing activities, rectangle caves, communal land ownership, matrilineal and superimposed part lineal organization, also polygamy, and interest in secret cults, wood carvings and ceremonial masks.

There is one more cultural area which we can not define it as basic area because is broken geographically and interspersed in the two others. This is the Pygmies of Central Africa. Also we can say that it differs from the others sufficiently. They are close to Paleolithic elements as hunting, nomadism, loose tribal organization, monogamy and monotheism.

In contrast with South Africa counterparts Pygmies don't have interest in religious ceremonial, although we can define some, also in graphic and plastic arts. They live as they are occupied since large Negroes surrounding them. They have an almost symbiotic arrangement where large Negroes give a kind of patronage to the Pygmies. The Pygmies are forced to find their own forces for food and tools.

Among the racially purest Pygmies we can find in the northern Belgian Congo the *Mambuti*, the *Efé*, and the *Aka* of the Ituri Forest. In French Equatorial Africa, in the area of the Sanga and Ubangi Rivers we can find the *Babinga Pygmies*. Near the Ogowe River in the Gabon section live many tribes taking names from Negro groups like *Bongos*, *Bekus* and *Koas*. The true Pygmies are these three main groups: the Itury Forest, the Sanga – Ubangi and Gabon areas. Except these areas that the true Pygmies live, we can find in the inner circle of the Congo River the *Tshwa* and *Fotes* and in Ruanda the *Batwa*. These Pygmies have greater heights than the true Pygmies.

Concerning language areas we see that we can not define them in cultural areas but in independency. The most important language group is the Bantu, taking place from c. 4° above the Equator and including all the South Africa (with exception the Hottentots and Bushmen). In the east, the Kenya-Tanganyika area, the uppermost boundary of the Bantu map moves to about 4° south of Equator.

A second language group is the Sudanic which extends from the Sahara Desert to the northern Bantu line.

In the Nile region to the east of Lake Albert are found Nilotic (related to the Sudanic) the Nilo-Hamitic and the Hamitic language groups.

The French Equatorial Africa, most of the Belgian Congo, more than the half of Uganda and most of Tanganyika belong to the Bantu groups.

The Pygmies used to have their own language but today they adopt the languages of neighboring Negro tribes. In the Belgian Congo, the Mambuti of the south Ituri Forest

speaking a Bantu language, Kiira (language of the Babira-Bakumu tribes with whom they were formerly allied), the Efe Pygmies of the east Ituri Forest speak a Sudanic dialect. Two sub-groups of the Babinga Pygmies, the Babenzele and the Bangombe of the French Equatorial Africa speak the Bantu languages of their overlords, the Pomo and N'Gundi.

It is interesting to notice that Bantu speech family is divided into 150 languages with several characteristics as polysyllabic (with nasal and sonorous consonant in the second syllable) and from musical point of view pitch levels. Most of these languages have two or three tone levels, but we can also find some languages that have until nine tone levels. The Sudanic languages are monosyllabic, with absence of gender and as well as pitch levels. Although we can find a difference between these pitch levels for the two groups, in Sudanic languages, pitch level affects the structure while in the Bantu it affects grammatical and also structure.

The Indigenous races of the central belt are three: the Negro, the Pygmy and the Hamite (race and language family) Bantu refers only to a language family.

It is often noticed that culture area, language and race may be seen to form independent analytic categories. Watutsi (cattle complex) speak Bantu and racially they are of the Hamitic type. Mangbetu (north Belgian Congo) are an agriculture people that speak a Sudanic language and belong to the Negro type.



## CEREMONIAL MUSIC

Music, dance and poetry can cause hypnotic and ecstatic atmosphere as by the infusion of spiritual-mystical properties in the mind of the participants. Music belongs to ritual and this can be emotional intensifier and religious emblem. The music is the accompaniment for the ceremony.

The implements of magic and religion, such as music is, must have temporary holy shape to perform their roles with the greatest result. Ceremonial music deprives authentic clues to the musical nature of a indefinite group.

### *Healing Ceremonial*

Healing ceremonial is one activity that is devoted to cure illness and to provide health through music. This ceremonial is taking place in many tribes in Central Africa.

First of all we can see the Mambuti Pygmies of the Belgian Congo. They sing their special Lusumba songs to their central God, the "Great God of Forest", when someone is ill and they are using music as a mystic force with prayers purposes and not as a psychosomatic. Lusumba is a men secrets society separates the Mambuti pygmies. They borrowed this name from the large Bankumu group<sup>1</sup>. There music arts were magical healing in a high level and they were regarding there selves as specialists in the healing process.

Interesting is to refer the Watutsi of Ruanda, an advanced culture, brags a several class of *bapfumu* (healer-prophets) and also *abacumbi* (exorcises) to boot their regular *impara* (priest class). *Bapfumu* is even more divides to *abajiji* (healers) and *abagave* (prophets).

<sup>1</sup>See Colin M. Turnbull, "Pygmy Music and Ceremonial", Royal Anthropological Institute LV (Feb 1955).

Music is like a pharmaceutical value which is an important part of the shaman's<sup>2</sup> implements used with conscious deliberation.

Waswezi is the secret religious sect that Wanyamwezi of North Central Tanganyika was assigned the special task of healing. This cult was composed by male and female, in addition to the most secret societies. Waswezi is a demon-worshipping cult, paying homage to Lyangomble (demon worshipping in this area). The dancers should cover demoniac crises and claim to be possessed by a demon who speaks through them. *Mutwale* is the priest that organizes all ceremonials. When the regular doctor is not able to cure a patient, the Waswezi specialists are responsible. They remain in the village four or five days, close to the patient, setting into motion all-day and all-night healing ceremonials including dancing and drumming.

Another tribe that has a healing ceremony is the Iteso of central Uganda. They use the medical dance Etida. It is a ceremony where men and women are taking part, dancing all-day and all-night. After in the daylight, half an hour of the dance, girls strip off the upper part of their clothing and roll in the dust, eating dust.

Except curing illness, healing ceremonial can help avoiding illness. The fact of illness is never seen as something natural but as a result of magic benevolence. In these ceremonial functions we can recognize an invincible match between good and evil forces. Good magic apply when break a spell is activated and cure the patient.

<sup>2</sup>The animistic religion of certain peoples of northern Asia in which mediation between the visible and spirit worlds is affected by shamans. Shamanism is a tribal religion in societies without a literary tradition. Healing is one function of the shaman and the most important along with prophecy. The shaman uses mystical powers to journey to other worlds or realities and communicate with spirits in order to bring about a balance between the physical and spiritual worlds

### ***Initiation Ceremonial***

Rites of initiation is considered as one of the biggest celebrations in Central Africa. In this ceremony puberty, secret society and royal rites are included.

Beginning with Mambuty Pygmies of the Belgian Congo, they practice *nkumbi* (circumcision) that belongs to puberty rite. Because of not-well societal organization of the Pygmies there is a lack of attention in initiation in general.

The rite of Circumcision is appeared in the development kingdom the Banyankole of Uganda, also in some parts of Tanganyika. The form of puberty in these areas involves endurance tests, flagellation, bodily markings and others, making emphasize the passage from childhood into adulthood.

The Wahele of Central Tanganyika is a different case where they have only female clitoridectomy and male initiation takes the form of flagellation.

Most of Bantu of Central Africa practice circumcision as a initiating the young to bona-fide tribal membership. Bantu circumcision is somehow in common with Islamic or Judaic circumcision.

In the Tuchiokwe of the Belgian Congo there is a virtuoso dancer and drummer, the *tangishi*, who is responsible to teach the *tundandji*, the esoteric songs and dances of circumcision. Many of these songs refer to anima. They express animals in the combined mask-and-cloak covering of feathers and fibres by the important dancers.

The Babira and related tribes of the Ituri Forest use also this costume. Here there are preparatory dances lasting four days and four nights. We can notice in this tribe two virtuoso dancers, Kikulu and Ndikwu.

Animal emulation for personal stimulation is paired with terrorization of non-initiates (women in this case). Cries, noises and audible animal imitations are on purpose designed to cause fear in the remote listener.

A great emphasis we must give in totem, the binding factor in clan-organization. Totem can be animal, plant or natural phenomenon. Although animals play a major role in the religious patterns and appears to be symbolic throughout the various ceremonials and secular activities.

Initiation is taking place every five to fifteen years that means that the age may include eight-nine years old until twenty years old people.

As we mentioned above secret societies appear in Central Africa. They belong to agriculture groups. Many of these societies are semi-religious cults with special powers. For example the Waswezi that could heal people. Each society has its own secret formulas, passwords, dress and masks emblems, behavior patterns and also initiation ceremonies. A name of the local names for secret society is *ngoma*. The semi-professional is divided in *mbina* that means dance and secret society and *moga* that means profession and secret society.

A major ceremony is taking place also when a new chief is installed. Chief is the king of a tribe. The ceremony here has the character of coronation. (See transcription 1 from Babira).

### ***Birth Ceremonial***

An abnormal event considers the birth of twins. The musical performers of these ceremonies are women. Usually women's dance-song marks the occasion of the birth queen. (See transcription 2 from Kuyu)

### ***Marriage Ceremonial***

In Central Africa is evident that the groom gives the dowry to his wife. Exogamy is the general rule, marriages within the same clan or kinship are forbidden. The Watutsi bride (Ruanda) must have her head completely covered. The girl of this tribe marries at fourteen or fifteen and her parents buy for her three or four cows (this has the meaning of compensation for the loss of the girl's services from the parents).

Among the tribes we can point that when a king of Urundi marries, royal drums are playing until the marriage finishes. In the Stanley Ville area of Belgian Congo, before the wedding the groom sends a drummed message that says "my heart beats pit-a-pat". In Wanyamwezi of Tanganyika, an idiophone (*sanza*) plays a *harusi* (wedding tune). Also is included from the Wasukuma of Tanganyika an unaccompanied wedding song for male solo and mixed chorus. (See transcription 3 from Wasukuma)

### ***Hunting Ceremonial***

When a major hunt is coming up many tribes sing, dance and play special hunting songs, not always applying in ceremonial. The determining is to insure victory and the music and dances finish when the hunting is over.

The Kuju (French Equatorial Africa), use Kabe, a shaman's song, to attract alligators. The Mambuti Pygmies (Ituri Forest in Belgian Congo) and Babinga Pygmies (French Equatorial Africa) have elephants and okapi (small giraffes) as the major animals hunted. After killing an elephant a ceremonial for carving the animal may be performed. The ceremonial performed with the exuberant men sing in chorus and solo the time that women prepare the meat waiting in the background. After the meal, the Mambuti, sit around the fire and sing their day's hunt. This is a social song and not a ceremonial and they could sing all-night long. One of the men is singing against a choral ostinato executed in the Mambuti interlocking<sup>3</sup> style, describing the successful hunting. (See transcription 4)

### ***New Year and New Moon Ceremonial***

In this ceremony we can see celebrations with imitations of the phases of the moon, the course of the sun, the changing seasons and more. They appear in forms of dance, song, instrumental music and narration. The Baya (French Equatorial Africa), dance in a circle dance the night of full moon. The Babunda (Belgian Congo), sing in mixed groups to celebrate the full moon. In the Banyoro (Uganda), the royal *makondere* (gourd-horn ensemble) of the *Mukama*, king of this tribe, plays on the first day of the new moon.

<sup>3</sup> This is not a "natural" style, in the sense that is natural for the key-instruments. Nor is it "natural" to single instruments playing only one tone each. The single flutes probably are duplicating a vocal melody executed in the same style.

## THE “TALKING” DRUM

As we have studied in the first chapter African languages have from two to nine speech levels. African Negro invented one drum that could reach almost nine pitch levels in addition to make announcements to all the tribes every day.

The Bantu languages (150 as we said in the first chapter) have great number of pitch levels. Most of the languages in the area of the basin of the central and lower Congo River have nine pitch levels (for example Zulu) and they have a very complicated tonal character. (We can notice a nasal consonant on the second syllable that seems to affect vocal production).

Areas with three pitch levels are the East and South Belgian Congo and Bantu languages of Tanganyika.

Speaking about Soudanic languages (in the Sahara region, above 3° North Latitude), we can notice that they have tone levels that can be important for the meaning of the words even if they are generally mono-syllabic. In this point we can compare the Soudanic languages with the Bantu, noticing that the Bantu pitch levels can affect grammatical tense and importance in meaning in addition to Soudanic that pitch levels are more semantic in meaning instead of grammar.

About the African signaling using drum sounds we can refer to idiophones slit drum, the most used instrument for this purpose. On the other hand, antelope horns and ocarinas (owl flutes), membranophone ngoma drums and vertical flutes, whistles and two-toned bells, two stringed stick zithers and also human voice may be used to assume messages over long distances.

The “Talking Drum” is using a method where they learn by memory the vocal syllables that represent the pitches of the drum messages as a help in mastering the final form of the messages themselves. We can compare this method with the Western “do-re-mi” method.



According to the messages that the drum was producing, we must say that they are not characteristic of everyday speech but traditional sayings and proverbs based on classic literature of the tribe, including legend, treasured heritage of folklore that passed from generation to generation in a poetic medium. Nowadays the modern civilization has a new method of telegraphy.

In Belgian Congo, when the chief returns to the village the Batetela, drummer uses the paraphrase “the cave termite heap; the animals don’t leap over it” and the pitch variations (also rhythm) of this phrase: *owanji; nkoi*, that will duplicate on the drum, the second syllable of the first word receiving a high-pitched tone and the others low tones. In Lokele (also in Belgian Congo) the word lomata (manioc) will be used as “manioc which lies in the fallow ground”. In Stanley Ville area, when they wanted to announce to a father that travels the birth of his child they sent “set the heart down (don’t worry), the child has not set down his feet in the black body of the mother”. And a death message can be sent like that: “tears in the eyes, wailing in the mouth”.

Discussing the slit drum that was used for communicating we must refer to the low lip and the high lip. The low lip is the female’s voice, *limiki lya otomali*. The high lip is the male’s voice, *limiki lya otolomi*. According to this way of dividing we can say that high means something large, strong in addition to low that means small, weak.

Slit drum existed in many different shapes and sizes. Always the tones are two in every slit drum.

## SCALE MOTIONS

In Central Africa we can define two scale forms, the diatonic and the pentatonic. These two forms have transitional relationship.

Diatonic as a term, means “tempered”, according to Western non-microtonic scale. It refers to a stepwise motion that occurs within any span (octave, fifth or fourth). It involves whole tones and semitones if we compare it to the diatonic tetrachord of Ancient Greece.



Pentatonic as a term applies only to a span of octave, building with five steps made up of seconds and unfilled thirds within the octave span. In some not so common instances, the equal-stepped pentatonic scale in an octave span gives distinction to the interval of 240 Cents, including a whole tone and a minor third. Although some writers refer to pentatonic scale built in smaller span than the octave, such as pentatonic tetrachord, which is built with seconds and thirds. It is better when we want to designate wide-stepped melody within any span to use the term chasmatonic, a term that counterbalance “diatonic”.



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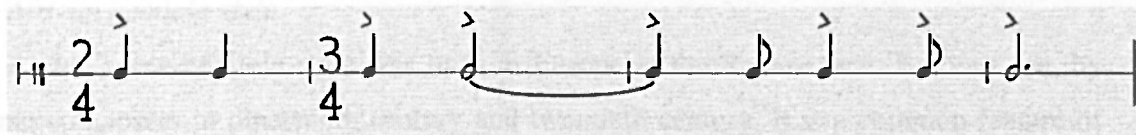


## RHYTHM IN CENTRAL AFRICA

It is a fact that African music is mostly about rhythm and that rhythm is to African music what harmony is to European music. In a more complex picture we can find four elements of music: rhythm, melody, harmony and timbre. It is important to notice that rhythm is fundamental to all music. Also we could say that rhythm is very nerve system in music. We can explain this with a non-musician person that can understand first the rhythmic organization.

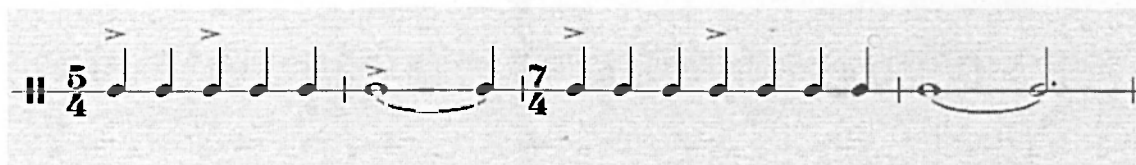
### *Rhythmic displacement*

Rhythmic displacement occurs when, instead of accentuating the accepted strong beats, one accentuates the weak beats.



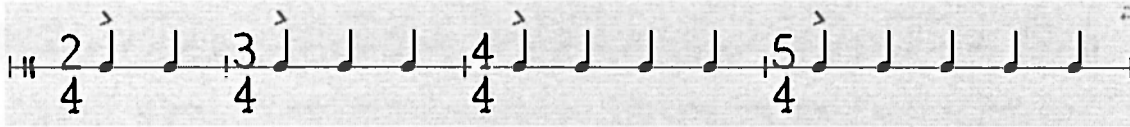
### *Irregular times*

Irregular time applies when the time signature is 5, 7 and not 2, 3, 4



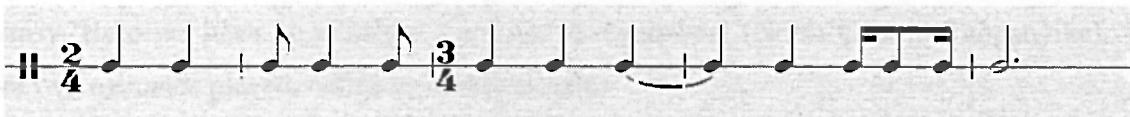
### *Variable meters*

We can have many meters changing the time signature every time.



### *Syncopation*

Syncopation occurs when two beats are split into three pulses of which the second is the longer note value.

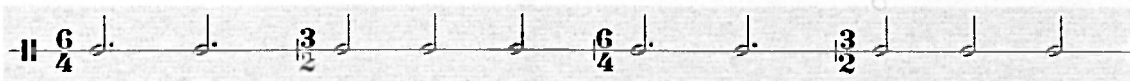


These were the fundamental rhythmic principles. Now we can follow with the African rhythmic styles.

### *African hemiola style*

As we know hemiola style was used in Europe in the Renaissance, Baroque era, by some composers in nineteenth century and twentieth century. It is a common feature of African music. It is about the relationship of the “long” and “short” 2:3 and reverse 3:2. In more simple words it is the combination of the compound duple with the simple triple times. For example, two dotted semiquavers are followed by three semiquavers and reverses. This makes rhythm fascinating. It can be used in the horizontal or vertical form.

Example of horizontal example:



African hemiola style is connected with rhythmic styles of Middle East and India.

### *Polyrhythm*

As we have polyphonic music we have also polyrhythmic music. This is about simultaneously playing parts, contrasting rhythmic patterns. It has a contrapuntal character. This example may count also as vertical form of hemiola style.



### *Ostinato rhythm*

Ostinato is the persistent repetition of a rhythmic pattern. From one point of view ostinato represents order and structure; on the other point of view it represents trance and ecstasy. Here we have an example from the Wanyamwezi (North Central Tanganyika) with two ostinatos played, called as multi ostinato)



## HARMONY IN CENTRAL AFRICA

As we know harmony occurs when two or more notes or pitches are sounded together. Here we will see the harmony of one kind, which is manifesto on traditional African music.

### *Consecutive octave*

Even though singing or playing in parallel octaves does not constitute in harmony, there is a harmonic suspicion in the overtones that gives colorist differentiation in the parts (voices). This can occur naturally when a man and a woman are singing together.



### *Consecutive fourth and fifth*

Consecutive fourth and fifths occur when we split the octave either upwards (for example c-g = fifth, g-c = fourth) or downwards, which is a hollow sound quality, most used in Africa.





### *Consecutive third*

Here we split the fifth into two (c-e-g) and we can have a major third (c-e) as known in Europe, and this gives the character of a major triad. The consecutive use of higher part (e-g) gives a series of minor thirds



### *Consecutive triads*

Triads occur when all three notes are present and one gets sonorous passage of consecutive thirds and fifths (triads).



### *Hocket*

Hocket is a technique that was used from Mambuti Pygmies (see transcription 4). The word comes from Latin *hoquetus* that means hiccup. We can characterize it by breaking up the melodic flow into interrupted (hiccupped) fragments between two or more voices.

This technique, though, may affect the rhythm in harmony (horizontal and vertical) and in timbre (color of the melody).



In these examples we can find a varied use of diatonic, pentatonic and modal forms of melody. This harmonic style, though, did not develop into an all-around system of harmonic practice.

MELODIC TYPES IN CENTRAL AFRICA

it's use

Also there are chants with only one step, major second.

Canon was also present in this melodic type. We can see in Babinga Pygmies (French Equatorial system) simplicity of a polyphonic nature. They sing in modified canon (See transcription 5).

$$12 \times S$$



### ***Descending Tetrachord***

This melodic type contains firstly the single leap of a fourth interval. We can see in Mambutti Pygmies a two-step phrase spanning the interval of a fourth in a choral ostinato. (ex.2)

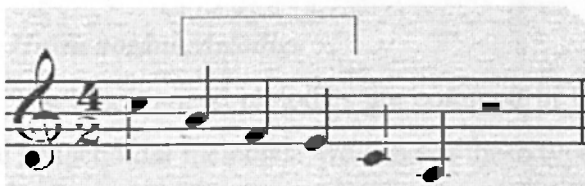
### **Mambutti Pygmies (Belgian Congo) Transcription 4**



Most of the tetrachord melodies are descending. Of course since voice attends to descent it is a natural tendency, taking as a fact that Central African music is vocally based.

When tetrachord is chasmatonic variety this tetrachord is rarely completely filled when it appears as ostinato. When it is diatonic the tetrachord normally is part of a more expanded melodic line. Diatonicism has been established by African musical scene.

We can see an example of Batwa Pygmies (Ruanda) where the tetrachord is part of a melody spanning a tenth. (ex.3)



The non-hemitonic tetrachord is very common. The intervals, descending minor third plus a major second, are producing the most characteristic combination. (See transcription 4 of Magbuti Pygmies-Belgian Congo, hunting ceremony). This kind of tetrachord is one of the most important skeletal bases in Central Africa. It appears usually at the lower end of the octave. Many melodies assume a central common note where a fifth extends upward and a fourth downward.

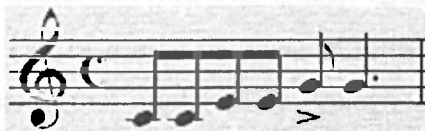


### ***Rising Pentachord Fanfare***

In Pentachords fanfares the tetrachord appears to rest in the second. We can see an example of N’Gundi Girls (French Equatorial) where the motif is in solo line, where is emphasized the second. (ex.4)



Pentachord pervades a religious, traditional category of expression, circumcision rituals. For example we can see in Babere (Belgian Congo) circumcision dance the rising pentachord. (ex.5)



Pentachordal melodies are widely circulated in skeletal form of a pentachord 1-3-5 or more often in octave.

### ***Hexachordal Melodies***

The large ranged melodies are common in Central Africa. Among them we can find the hexachordal melodies. We can see these types of melodies in many ways. Pentachord plus second (ex.6), tetrachord plus third (ex.7) or second plus tetrachord plus second (ex.8)

Ex. 6 Wachaga Chief-Praise Song (Tanganyika)



Ex. 7 Magbetu Choral Song (Belgian Congo)



Ex. 8 Baganda Historic Song with Harp (Uganda)



### *Minor Seventh with tritone effect*

Use of tritone (augmented fourth) impressed the Westerns. It seems that tritone has a quality that implies bold dramatic tension. These melodies emphasize a minor seventh and are also diatonic as chasmatonic. Minor seventh sometimes has the quality of dominant seventh chord or an incomplete dominant ninth. We can see example of the Bapere Horns (Belgian Congo) (ex.9).



Tritone melodies are having two possibilities that explain them.

- 1) A major third nuclear motif, in its growth towards the pentachord, connects with the fifth (raised fourth), c-d-e-f#-g.
- 2) The extension of the major third nucleus downward by a major second, e-d-c-b.

In all examples the 7<sup>th</sup> appears as a lowered leading tone.

### ***Octave melodies: Descending and Ascending***

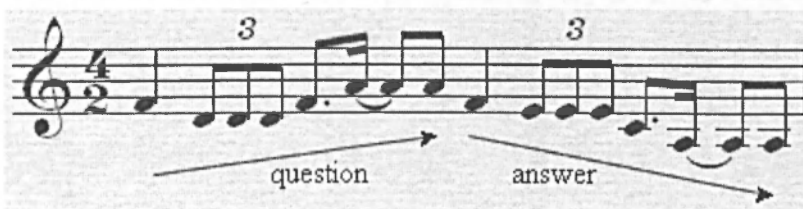
Octave melodies are very common in Central Africa. The descending octave melodies are more numerous than the ascending ones. All the melodies are based in rhythm, regular or hemiola style with some exceptions of freely pathogenic type. We can see an example from a Magbetu Choral Song (Belgian Congo) that we can study descending style. (ex.10)



A way of emphasizing the melody is more common. They achieve this using zig-zag movement, accompanied by parallel thirds. See the example from Mangbetu Choral Song (Belgian Congo), (ex.11).



Other kind of emphasizing the melody is the combination of directions. Rising and descending, something we can say as question and answer. We can see a simple example from Batwa Pygmy (Ruanda), (ex.12).



The ascending octave melody is not so common. Kuju and Wanyamwezi although were using this kind. We can see an example from Wanyamwezi Chief Installation Song. (ex.13)



### ***Supra-Octave Ladder of thirds***

This type is concerning building a third above a third, without any starting point or tonic center. These thirds are connected to alternate major and minor intervals. We can see in Batwa Pygmies who have a distinct octave-organization, four thirds spanning a ninth. (ex.14)



### ***Non-tempered intervals***

Until now we studied chasmatonic, diatonic, small-ranged and large-ranged scales including large variety of interval sizes.

#### ***A capella***

*A capella* is one of the most common types in music language. It considers vocal intonation, which is adaptable. Sometimes, although, intonation is counted differently by singing for example the solo in salendro<sup>1</sup>-like intervals of c. 240 cents. We can also notice sharpening and flattening sustained notes or occasional large major second.

About instruments we can see that Uganda xylophones were tuned by people that were influenced by Westerns. The French Equatorial xylophone tuned pentatonically, having a variety of seconds and thirds, some according to Westerns and some other approximating the salendro “neutral” intervals (253 cents, 240 cents, 270 cents).

Winds show distinctive interval-tunings (playing lip adjustments).

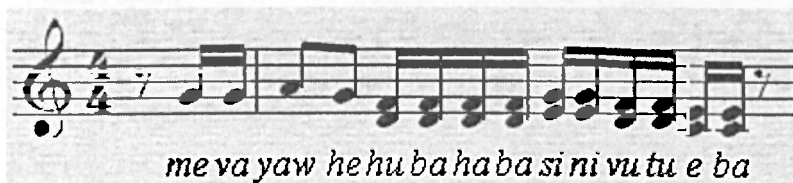
<sup>1</sup>Salendro is a pentatonic scale, one of the two most common scales (*laras*) used in Indonesian gamelan music, the other is pelog. Its five pitches are equally spaced within the octave.

## POLYPHONY AND FORM

As we know from Western music in early polyphony they had a horizontal thinking instead of vertical. They had a unique kind of polyphony, functional harmony. Functional harmony is a special subdivision of polyphony which theoretically refers to the appearance of more than one musical line at the same time.

### *Parallelism*

In western music the traditional harmony includes the interval of third, within a triadic setting. In Central Africa we studied the third in Pentachord Fanfare, zig-zag thirds and Ladder of Thirds. Parallel thirds are found in Magbetu Pygmies, (Belgian Congo), Choral Song (ex.1).



Parallel thirds in vocal music can not achieve heterophony. In vertical combinations the result is to different performers sing the same melody without attempting strict unison. For example when men and women sing together, parallel octave is achieved, while same as performers can pursue in voice-range variations, parallel fifths and fourths. (ex.2). Also they are mixing parallel thirds, fourths and sixths.

See transcription 3 -Wasukuma Wedding song (Tanganyika)



### ***Choral antiphonal and solo choral responsorial singing***

The most understandable term by all musicians is the “answer” section which is used very often by all tribes in Africa. The “answering” section starts before the first section is completed.

If the answer is imitative we can achieve a *canon*.

If the answer is not imitative we can achieve a cadential elongation of the phrase.

We can see but rarely a modified canon in the interval of fifth. The babinga Pygmies yodel canon (the motif in the three lowest sounding tones of the solo yodeler) gives rise to vertical intervals of thirds and fifths (ex.3).

(See transcription 5) –Babinga Pygmy Elephant Hunting Song (French Equatorial)



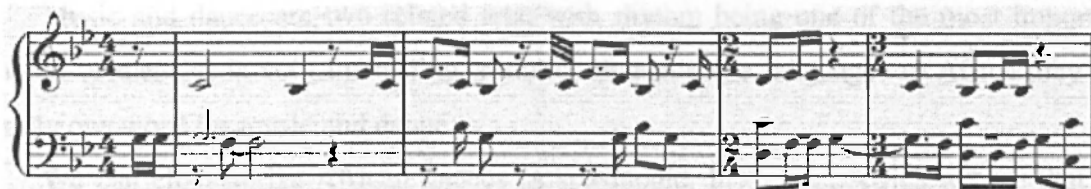
A continuous choral ostinato lends itself to a canonic passage at the fifth interval. The Mambuti Pygmies (Belgian Congo) with the canon ostinato shows the vertical interval of the second (ex.4).

See transcription 4 – Mambuti Pygmy Song (Belgian Congo)





We can see several contrapuntal movement of dual or triple melody type in Banyoro (Uganda), Royal Horns, (ex.5), where the vertical intervals are result from two kinds of melodic counterpoint range from the fourths, fifths and minor sevenths.



### ***Musical forms in Central Africa***

#### **LITANY FORM**

An immediate melodic repetition (not necessarily exact) in form A,A,A,... Sometimes the length of the melody may make inner subdivision so that melody is actually a period, A(abc), A(abc),... in litany form is included the antiphony and response giving for example the form A(ab), A(ab),... (See transcription 2 Kuyu Women's Dance). The ostinato and drone ostinato gives the form A,A..., even if a soloist live added to the ostinato may cause a more complex form (see transcription 4 from Mambuti Pygmies).

#### **RONDO-LIKE FORM**

A(abc), B(de), A'(bc), B(de), A'(bc), B'(d), A(abc)

The text in this form is always the same except for the "e" phrase, which has a new statement. (See transcription 6 from Batoro Song)

## THE DANCE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Music and dance are two related arts; with rhythm being one of the most important main element. It is very interesting to notice that in some languages in Africa they use only one word for music and dance.

We can characterize African dances as spasmodic. In Central Africa we see that the dancing styles and forms are different from region to region or tribe to tribe, this is depended on psycho cultural factors. Flinging up and out, centrifugal leaping and kicking are dance forms of Central Africa.

Mimetic animal dance, convulsive shaman dance of inner ecstasy, fertility, marriage, initiation, war and funeral dances comes from Central Africa.

Pygmy group should be an exception since they are following nomadic life in the forest. They are shy and retiring maybe because of the need for being always alert to dangers, even human. They avoid noise because they do not want to cause any danger. They are still dancing, singing and drumming in their feasts but very soft.

Mimetic animal dance is close to theater form, named from Africans *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In this form song, dance, instruments, speech and drama act together. This primitive theatre is a collective affair where the center of the village or *kraal* was the stage and the *dramatic personae* the initiates of the day.

The needs for such a theatre include highly elaborate masks. The dancers camouflage their individuality and they try to define the appearance and character of the animal they are miming.

Masks are used for other dances related to imaginary and ghost-like powers, ancestor spirits, fertility, death, birth, and harvest and other. Though dance pantomime could be realistic in fertility and harvest themes.

We should mention *kutu*, a vivid mimetic dance from the Kuju (French Equatorial Africa) which combines farming, death and sex. It is a dance that belongs to a ceremonial



of planting and reaping. The dance takes place mostly when a woman proficient in manioc farming has died. *Kutu* is divided in three parts in a form of a cappella accompaniment of an ostinato choral melody, making accelerando in every part. These three parts or sections are episodes in a mime story that is symbolic and realistic.

We are seeing dances that are not mimetic in many forms and situations. Circle and column are two basic forms that can be also found in mimetic dances. They use these dances to express urges, to collect desire to move and to exercise rhythmically. If we study the Mambuti Pygmy, they usually strike a drum and the same time they hop from one foot to the other and the entire camp join them in an all night affair. Women dance separately from the men, in beating time they clapped their hands to the level of their faces. Men play the flute as they dance. However, they do not have so good drama or vigorous music. They use small intervals, small melodic lines symmetrical rhythm and without any changes in dynamics.

Sometimes magical purpose controls the dance. Shaman solo dancers are given to this kind of abstract ecstasy. As we saw in previous chapter the Iteso (Uganda) had the haling dance *Eitida*. In this dance, interpreters dance in a circle around the drummer and finally in almost hypnotic hysteria roll on the ground stuffing their mouths with dirt.

*Ngoma* drum-ceremonial of Wanyamwezi (Tanganyika) takes place every full moon as we know. It is a non mimetic dance. They dance in a closed circle and the move with ecstatic shaking and spasmodic contortion. This appears in the different secret society initiations and in the dances of the demon-worshipping Waswezi cult of the Wanyamwezi.

Watutsi (Ruanda) use a large, expanded, leaping style shooting movement in their dances. They sing in a chamber music form. The Watutsi octave-fall (while they leap upward) and together with the expanded dance motions and the athletic high jump.

We can face a combination between drama, dance and rhythm when performers start all together communicating extra musical ideas and when the action goes into miming and enacting episodes taken from various communal and individual events.

## SINGING STYLE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Singing style especially in Africa is characterized by the culture. The reason is very simple. In other cultures, for example the Western European culture, the music can be sang very easily if we consist that the music is written and that it can be sang by anyone. In central African except that the melody especially in primitive era wasn't written, they are using different ways to sing, such as special effects and different ornaments. The absence of vibrato also is very important issue, and reason that the singing style in Africa is different from the ones in other cultures.

### *Absence of vibrato*

We can start with the absence of vibrato which is typical for male and female singing. We know that vibrato is acoustically a regular pitch variation at the rate of almost six changes per second. In Central Africa since the vibrato is absent, an occasional tremolo appears (not so often), concerning that tremolo is much faster than the vibrato, having from seven to eleven movements per second. This leads us to a narrow pitch variation.

### *Special Effects*

Yodeling: yodel or "falsetto" consist a lighting alteration of isolated lower and upper registers, (see transcription 5 from Babinga Pygmies).

Humming: is phonation with closed mouth.

Sprechstimme: semi speech singing.

Melodic interlocking: also called hocket (see chapter 6), here the melody is broken up into minute fragments, sung in turn by different individuals. (See transcription 4 from Mambuti Pygmies).

Glissando: pitch slurring through undefined larynx tension.

Whistling: comes from breath blown through pursed and tensed lips without laryngeal participation.

## INSTRUMENTS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

The last but not least is the “Talking Drum”. We must consider in special effects since it duplicates the singing voice. (See chapter 3)

### ***Syllabic and melismatic singing***

We know from Gregorian chant the meaning of syllabic and melismatic singing. Syllabic means that there is usually one syllable to a note, melismatic singing occurs when we find several notes to one syllable. In Central African singing they use syllabic singing in an effort to make a musical consonant emphasis and contribution to the dynamic emphatic vocal style. In the places that in the tribes that were Arabic influenced is used melismatic singing style.

### *Enka and Itle*

In Uganda as we saw in the chapter on ceremonial music the Luso tribe was performing a traditional dance, Enka. This dance is accompanied by *Enka* and *Itle*. *Enka* is one wide, tubular membranophone, four feet long and three feet in diameter and *Itle* is a minute membranophone, nine inches long and three inches in diameter. We can call *Itle* rattic drum since it contains two pebbles that can achieve a high pitched note. Both *enka* and *itile* are stick beaten drums.

### *Anshoto*

Anshoto is used only in Ituri Forest in initiation ceremony. The drum generally is the leading instrument in the initiation ceremonies. It is a drum without a bottom and with a manually rubbed cord protruding from the skin.

## INSTRUMENTS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

When we are referring to musical instruments in Central Africa the first instrument that we must refer to is the “talking drum” \*<sup>1</sup>. It is one of the most special elements that can describe African music and make the difference of other kinds of music. They found an astonishing way communicating between people.

The most common family of instruments is of course the family of percussion. As we know that African music is all around rhythm.

### *Ngoma*

Ngoma is a special drum that was mostly used in healing ceremonial for all night singing and dancing continuum\*<sup>2</sup>.it is a long, tubular membranophone, one foot in diameter and five and a half feet tall which is a hand beaten drum. It is mostly used from *Mambuti Pygmies* (Belgian Congo), *Watusi* (Ruanda) and *Wanyamwezi* (North Central Tanganyika).

### *Etida and Itele*

In Uganda as we saw in the chapter of ceremonial music the Iteso tribe was performing a medicinal dance, *Etida*. This dance is accompanied by *Etida* and *Itele*. *Etida* is one wide, tubular membranophone, four feet long and three feet in diameter and itele is a minute membranophone, nine inches long and three inches in diameter. We can call itele rattle drum since it contains two pebbles that can achieve a high pitched note.

Both *etida* and *itele* are stick-beaten drums.

### *Amahoto*

Amahoto is used only in Ituri Forest in initiation ceremony. The drum generally is the leading instrument in the initiation ceremonies. It is a drum without a bottom and with a manually rubbed cord protruding from the skin.

\*<sup>1</sup>(see chapter 3)

\*<sup>2</sup>(see chapter 2)

### ***Mabilango***

Mabilango is a friction drum with a moistened skin where a leaf and a perpendicularly held drumstick are placed. The player presses the drumstick with wet hands, demonstrating sex symbolization involving male and female characters.

### ***Emidiri***

Emidiri is a cylinder drum used in pairs in twin-birth ceremonies. It is covered at one end with lizard skin fastened down with studs. It is used by the Iteso tribe (Uganda).

### ***Sanza***

Sanza is a keyed, thumb-plucked idiophone used from the Wanyamwezi (Tanganyika) in marriage ceremony.

### ***Loose, Fixed and Free-log xylophones***

These xylophones without resonators are the instruments that are used by Belgian Congo and Uganda tribes. In Belgian Congo they are using a name for fixed-log xylophones *maliba* and *madimba*. For the free-log xylophone of the north Belgian Congo they are using the name of *padingbwa*. The Uganda xylophone is called *madinda*.

We can just refer to the wind family of instruments that is used in Central Africa. Among them are the *mirliton pipes* (closed at one end leaf), *whistles* and *flutes, rattles* (including strung and gourd types). All these three families are used by the Itury forest.

Also in the Kuju tribe (French Equatorial Africa), *transverse antelope horn, drums, sticks* and *handclapping* are used as accompaniment for *Kabe* song\*<sup>3</sup>.

\*<sup>3</sup>(see hunting ceremony in chapter 3)

## CONCLUSION

In summing up, I would like to specify my results of this thesis. Central Africans were always in a group spirit, having their special ceremonies that make them also so different from tribe to tribe. Furthermore, it is unique the fact that most of Africans can dance and have good and correct voices. In addition to their achievements in music, the “hemiola style” in rhythm is one of their most important styles and the “Talking Drum”, which is something unreachable in our minds.

Firstly, according to the group spirit, Africans were very close with each other and they could communicate in an excellent way. We can see this through their ceremonies. It was a way for them to work all together. They were spending a lot of their time every day for these ceremonies.

Secondly, there ceremonies show that they don't believe in the same things with Europeans, they have different Gods or even some tribes believe in demons. On the top of that, they were trying to cure people through their beliefs. They achieved medicine curing sickness and initiation.

Moreover, these ceremonies made everyone separately to learn how to dance and to sing from a small age. This is a very amazing thing to notice. Most of them can sing as professionals, and they have voices that almost no one else can achieve in a life time.

At the end, “Talking Drum” is the instrument that proves their abilities to music. Because of their multiple speech levels they are able to recognize the Drum levels and understand some sentences and announcements of the tribe.

It is a fact that someone can be taught a lot from Central African music. Their simplicity is also something that all the other people can learn from.

## Summary

In my bachelor thesis I studied how harmony, rhythm and forms can apply in ceremonial music in Central Africa, forms and rhythms that we can find in European music also but somehow different.

Firstly, I spoke about the Geographical area in Central Africa, which is divided in latitudes. And how in these latitudes since there were boundary marks, political territories involved. These territories were French Equatorial Africa, the Belgian Congo and Ruanda – Urundi, Uganda and Tanganyika.

Secondly, I speak about ceremonial music, how music, dance and drama come together. It is very strange to notice that in some of their languages they use only one word for music, dance and drama. I moved through healing, initiation, birth, marriage, hunting, and New Year and new moon ceremonies.

Furthermore, one of the most interesting parts of my thesis is the “Talking Drum”, a drum that can announce important news to the tribes. For me of course is very unique but it is normal if we consider that some of these tribes have until nine pitch levels in their speech.

One of their special elements is rhythm. African hemiola style is a style that we know from early European music. Considering harmony the most interesting is “hocketus”, a technique that can be described by breaking up the melodic flow into interrupted (hiccupped) fragments between two or more voices.

I continued with the melodic types and with the singing style where we can notice the absence of vibrato and the appearance of tremolo (six changes per second).

And finally, I spoke about the musical instruments they are using. Most of them are percussion and there are also some wind instruments.



## RÉSUMÉ

Ve své bakalářské práci jsem zkoumala jak může být použita harmonie, rytmus a formy v ceremoniální hudbě Střední Afriky, ty formy a rytmy, které můžeme nalézt také v evropské hudbě, ale poněkud odlišné.

Nejdříve jsem popisovala geografické oblasti Střední Afriky a jejich rozdělení v zeměpisné šířce. Jak jsou v těchto svobodných územích od doby vyznačení hranic zahrnuta politická teritoria. Tato teritoria představují Francouzskou rovníkovou Afriku, Belgické Kongo a Ruanda-Urundi, Ugandu a Tanganyiku.

Dále se zabývám obřadní hudbou a tím, jak se v ní spojily hudba, tanec a divadlo. Je zvláštní zjistit, že v některých jazycích je užito pouze jedno slovo pro hudbu, tanec a divadlo. Zkoumala jsem obřady léčení, zasvěcení, narození, svatby, honu, Nového roku a nového měsíce.

Nicméně jedna z nejzajímavějších částí mé práce pojednává o mluvícím bubnu, tj. bubnu, který je schopen promluvit, aby oznámil významné zprávy příslušníkům kmenů. Připadá mi to velmi unikátní, ale přitom je to normální, zvážíme-li, že některé z těchto kmenů mají dosud devět výškových hladin své řeči.

Další zvláštní prvek je rytmus. Styl africké hemioly známe z rané evropské hudby. Co se týče harmonie, nejzajímavější je hoquetus, technika, která může být popsána jako lomení melodického proudu do přerušovaných fragmentů mezi dva či více hlasů.

Dále pokračuji zkoumáním melodických typů a pěveckého stylu, u kterého můžeme pozorovat absenci vibrata a objevení tremola (šest změn za vteřinu).

Závěrem se zmiňuji o užitých hudebních nástrojích. Většina z nich jsou bicí, ale jsou zde také některé dechové nástroje.



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# BABIRA CIRCUMCISION

Drums of Chied Kokonyange

Belgian Congo

7

15

21

28

35

41

49

# KUJU

Women's dance  
Birth of Twins

♩ - 120  
French Equatorial (Fort Rousset) Transposed down minor 2nd

Solo Choir solo (shouty) chorus

Iron Bell

Drums

5 solo chorus solo etc

The musical score is written for three parts: vocal, Iron Bell, and Drums. The vocal part is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 120. It features a key signature change to B-flat major (one flat) and includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings. The vocal part is divided into sections labeled 'Solo', 'Choir', 'solo (shouty)', and 'chorus'. The Iron Bell part consists of a series of rhythmic patterns. The Drums part consists of a series of rhythmic patterns. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 5. The score ends with the word 'etc'.

# WASUKUMA

Wedding Song  
"Kabunga"

Taganyika  
Transposed down minor 2nd

Male Solo [A]

Mixed choir Mu li ba ne na li ya gamba iya vuhsu ehlu o ne o ne mu li bo ne na

6

li ya gamba iya vuhsu ehlu o ne o ne mu li bo ne na li ya gamba iya vuhsu ehlu o

12

[B]

hu a a Hu wawa a omenya o su a ki nama len ke ra hu wawa a omenya

18

[C]

o su a ki nama len ke ra i vo ne na i ya gamba iya vuhsu ehlu o

24

[C]

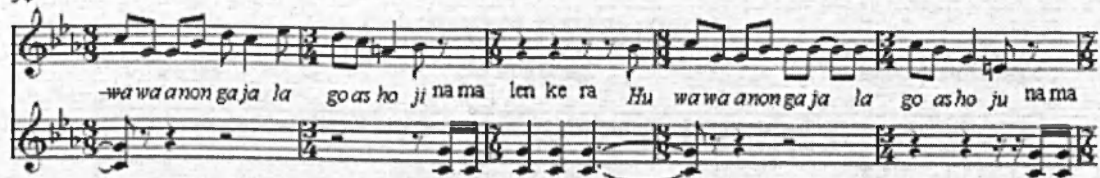
ne o ne Hu wawa a nonga ja la go as ho ji sa me len ke ra mu wawa a nonga ja la

29

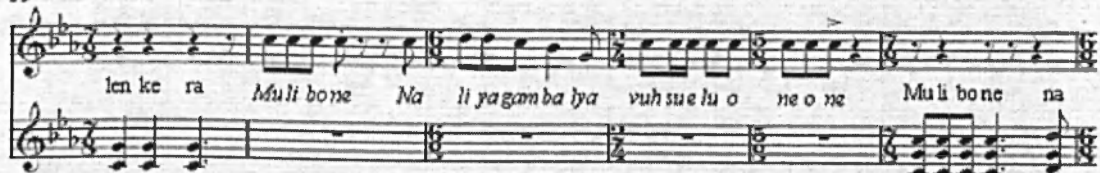
go as ho ji nama len ke ra Hu wawa a nonga ja la go as ho ji nama len ke ra hu



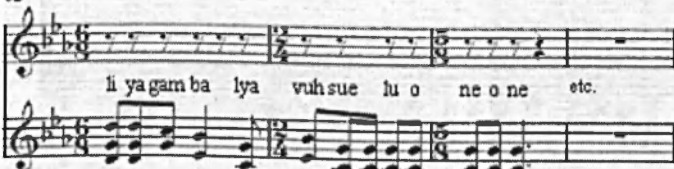
34



39



45





# MAMIBUTI PYGMIES

## Hunting Song

Belgian Congo (Itun Forest)  
Transposed down minor 2nd

$\text{♩} = 100$

**TENOR 1**  
Male solo  
e bo ya bo va yi ne ve ho

**TENOR 2**  
Male Chorus

**T. 1**  
2nd chorus  
Solo

**T. 2**  
2nd chor.

**T. 1**  
16  
2nd Solo

**T. 2**

**T. 1**  
24  
2nd Solo

**T. 2**

**T. 1**  
33  
2nd chor.  
Solo I

**T. 2**

**T. 1**  
42  
Solo I

**T. 2**

**T. 1**  
47

**T. 2**

# BABINGA PYGMIES

Elephant-Hunt Ritual

"Yeli"

French Equatorial (Forest near Ouessa)

Female Yodeller

Female chorus

Hand Clapping

3

8

etc

The musical score is written for three parts: Female Yodeller, Female chorus, and Hand Clapping. The time signature is 3/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece. The second system starts at measure 3. The third system starts at measure 8 and ends with 'etc'. The Female Yodeller part features a melodic line with triplets. The Female chorus part provides harmonic accompaniment. The Hand Clapping part provides a rhythmic accompaniment.

# BATORO

Dance Song  
"Mutitira"

Uganda  
Transposed down major 2nd

Male Solo

Ti ti mu ti ti ra

Male Chorus

Ka re nukave numunya nu a kor ti ti mu ti ti re ka

Drums

4

a ka vu pu kune kay fun tzar

re nukave numunya nu a kor ka re nukave numunya na a kor

7

tahy di vo katay ko zi

ti ti mu ti ti ra ka re nukave numunya nu a kor ka

10

re nukave numunya nu a kor ti ti mu ti ti ra ka re nukave numunya nu a kor

13

zi ti mu ti ti ra

ka re nukave numunya nu a kor